



A nonprofit corporation

# THE BIRCH BARK

Spring 2014

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birchrock@birchrock.org www.birchrock.org

Rich Deering '73, Alumni & Community Director • Michael Mattson '83, Camp Director

## THE ALUMNI NEWSLETTER OF BIRCH ROCK CAMP

### REFLECTIONS FROM THE ROCK

*By Rich Deering*  
*Alumni & Community Director*  
*'73 –*

What makes Birch Rock phenomenal? There is no simple way to sum it up. Many dedicated people in our ever-widening community work hard all year round to set the stage for the summer season. Our talented and dynamic staff, supportive families and loyal alumni, skilled vendors and associated camp networks—are all vital in creating a successful camp season. But it's the final component, our superb campers, who ultimately make Birch Rock the place we treasure.

Birch Rock's supportive community fosters friendship, strength of character, love of nature, and healthy living. In our long experience, it's by nurturing and mentoring boys that they gain confidence and move toward greater independence.

I'm always struck by the profound benefit of unplugging kids from electronics. Campers thrive in our world of firm handshakes and direct, eyeball-to-eyeball communication. Each summer a diverse group of campers and staff pull together from around the country and the world. Learning about different cultures and perspectives and finding common ground is one of the most fascinating and rewarding things we share in at camp.

In this issue of *The Birch Bark*, a wide variety of perspectives shed new light on the Birch Rock experience. We always welcome your stories and insights. Come visit us this summer on Lake McWain, share your stories about BRC on Facebook, and remember that you are our best ambassadors with prospective families.

Please keep updated and informed on all things Birch Rock Camp at [www.birchrock.org](http://www.birchrock.org). Follow us on FACEBOOK.com/birchrock.

In the Spirit of Help the Other Fellow,

*Rich*



### THE PASSING OF A BIRCH ROCK CAMP LEGEND: JIM MARRION

*By Seth Brewster '60s –*



With great sadness we share the news that Jim Marrion, one of the legendary Birch Rockers of the 1960s and 70s, has passed away. He died on February 2, 2014 in New London, New Hampshire, at the age of 79.

For forty years, from 1967 to 2007, Jim taught and coached at Cardigan Mountain School in Canaan, New Hampshire. He taught math to boys from the sixth to the ninth grades, and coached football, basketball, baseball and soccer. Jim also served as athletic director for many years. Cardigan Mountain noted his passing with the following words: " 'Coach,' as he was called by so many, will be remembered for developing each student's self-esteem. As Coach himself said, 'Make each child feel special, and he will be all that he can be!'"

Chief Brewster, Birch Rock's founder, created Cardigan Mountain School in 1945 with Harold P. Hinman and

Earnest Martin Hopkins, the president of Dartmouth College. Like Birch Rock Camp, the school saw character-building as one of its primary goals.

At Birch Rock, Jim was head counselor from the 1960s to the early 70s. He was a force of positive energy, with an amazing 'can do' attitude and the belief that no challenge was too great. I first met Jim when I was six years old. He was awesome—like every superhero rolled into one—and I was awestruck. With his pristine white tee shirt, impeccable crew cut, broad smile, and athletic build, he inspired me to be a better Birch Rocker and a better person.

After my time at Birch Rock, I next saw Jim in the summer of 1977. My father and I were driving through Canaan after visiting Dartmouth College, and we ran into Jim in a local store. He radiated hospitality and kindness, and insisted that we come back to his home for dinner with his wife Connie. I remember that as he tended to the steaks on the grill, I felt so lucky to be with this man I deeply admired. He showed great interest in me and my life. Jim personified our motto, 'Help the Other Fellow.' He will be greatly missed.



# LIFE'S LESSONS

By Spaulding Goetze '06



If you look at the walls in the lodge, with all the past campers' names, you can't help but think of those who were there before you. Many of us have a relative on those walls (if not, you can look at the names and think of those campers as brothers). My father and my uncle were both Birch Rockers. My dad was a camper for six seasons, and he has lots of great memories that he's always shared with me. Because my dad was here, I feel that

Birch Rock has always been a part of me.

Birch Rock is my second home. It has taught me and my friends great life lessons that we will carry with us forever. It is where our characters were formed. I've always been shy, but when I'm at camp I'm able to open up. I can perform in Campfire and get excited to help young campers learn how to sail for the first time on Lake McWain. I feel more civilized here. Where else do you always tuck in your shirt and make sure your napkin is in your lap?

The best lesson that I learned, and that my father says to this day, is 'Help the Other Fellow.' We live by this motto at camp, and I try to live by it wherever I am. I keep my camp trunk in my bedroom, and the sticker with our motto on it reminds me constantly of Birch Rock and the greatest lesson.

*Spaulding will be joining the family business Goetze's Candy located in downtown Baltimore, MD.*

# FEAR OF SWIMMING

By Jeremy Lifter '04



Birch Rock Camp changed my life in every possible way. I arrived at camp as a shy eight-year-old boy, and left as a confident young man. A big part of this transformation came from overcoming a deep fear. I was afraid of the water. Swimming is at the heart of the Birch Rock experience. For years I struggled to go into deeper water and put my head under. I got help from nearly every staff member to work

through this.

When I finally got over my fear, my self-confidence skyrocketed. I decided that I wanted to join the staff ranks one day, to be able to give back to young campers the help that was given to me. During my CIT summer and the first year I was on staff, I was glad to be able to work individually with campers who had the same fear of swimming that I had struggled with. It was my hope that I could make even the smallest impact on one of these campers, as my counselors had done for me.

I believe that my eight summers at Birch Rock will be the most meaningful time of my life. 'Help the Other Fellow' is much more than a phrase on a plaque above the lodge door. These are words I continue to live by.

*Jeremy will be attending University of Cincinnati this fall.*

## BIRCH ROCK TRUSTEES

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# FROM MATINICUS HARBOR TO LAKE MCWAIN

By Pamela T Stock, '90s –



I am sitting on the deck of my home overlooking Matinicus Harbor. There are no lobster boats moored in the harbor at the moment. I believe one has gone out to fish this morning. But within the month, this harbor will be bustling with the energy and anticipation of another island summer.

Matinicus Island is Maine's most remote, year-round populated island. There are no stores whatsoever. We must fax our grocery orders to Shaws in Rockland. Weather permitting, the groceries will be flown out by single engine plane. That's also how we (people and dogs) get on and off island most of the time. There is ferry service once a month, weather permitting. So we don't make too many plans around the ferry right now. Our lifeline is that little single engine plane and the dirt airstrip. In the winter there are between 20-30 residents on island. We have a one room schoolhouse and are currently providing an education for two children. That's where I come in - as their teacher.

This is my last year as a public school teacher, having started back in 1974. I have taught in the Australian Outback, a one room schoolhouse in Vermont, and several other interesting, challenging environments. Seems only fitting and proper that my career ends on Maine's most remote island.

Sitting on this deck with a balmy 44 degree temperature, it feels like it's time to look ahead as the lobstermen do. My thoughts turn from Matinicus Harbor to Lake McWain. I remember the first time I walked into the little library. I think that was in 1992. I looked around longingly and asked if perhaps the camp needed a tutor or librarian? And here I am (just a few years later) still looking forward to that wonderful, magical building under the pines.

There have been a few changes since then. My original motivation for working at Birch Rock, besides the obvious, idyllic setting, was to provide an opportunity for my two young sons to attend camp. Zach and Tyler were 10 and 6 when they started. Now they are grown men (31 and 27) both living in Denver.

Some of you may remember Kermit, the original BRC Dog. There were even skits written about him for Campfire. When Kermit passed away, I was deeply moved and appreciative for the moment of silence held for him at lunch in the grove. Then it was on to the next golden personality, Bentley. His picture is still featured on the website with Andy Churchill in the library. Last summer he was joined by a step-brother, Brewster (I didn't even name him, just coincidence). He was a rescue dog and my Matinicus buddy. Both of these dogs were gentle, sweet souls who loved camp with a passion. Sadly, I must report that we lost both of these wonderful boys to cancer this winter. Bentley had just turned 11. Brewster was 9 or 10ish. I have no doubt that Bentley will be at camp in spirit next summer. He LOVED his tennis balls and swimming. Brewster was just figuring out what a great place camp was. We all will miss dogs in the library.

But I will be back, along with Ruth. We love the place, the people, the traditions and the energy that you can feel as you roll down the hill on Opening Day. So, as I watch the lobstermen loading their traps back onto their boats for the season ahead, I know that every additional boat in the harbor, and each trap in the ocean takes me one step closer to summer and another happy camping season at BRC.

*Pam Stock has been the head librarian at Birch Rock's Allen Kearns Library since 1992. Pam also tutors campers in reading, study skills, English as a Second Language, and math. Ruth Wilson has helped Pam run the library and tutor campers for four summers.*

## SPRING CLEAN-UP

**Saturday, May 17th**

Come join us in  
Raking and Rolling the  
BRC campus open for 2014.  
Lunch will be served!



# READING IS FUNDAMENTAL

*By Francie Campbell, Trustee*

Remember that phrase? Kind of corny, but it rings true for us Birch Rockers. Lots of boys need plenty of encouragement to dive into reading. Sometimes it's hard for them to settle down, curl up with a good book, and realize that it's a cool thing for boys to do.

At Birch Rock, reading is part of every camper's day. Each cabin counselor creates a reading-is-fun atmosphere, sometimes by reading out loud to the younger boys, and always by modeling the pleasure of reading during quiet rest periods. Young campers put their books on their pillows after making their beds, to show what they are reading and to encourage discussions about their choices.

Birch Rock's beloved library is a huge part of our reading culture. It's well stocked, extremely popular, and a great place to relax. The strong message we convey is that reading is just as enjoyable as any other activity we offer, and that boys and men can be avid readers. Birch Rock's message is ever more important for boys growing up in a world of digital distractions.

Nearly 25% of American adults did not read a single book in the past year, according to a recent Pew Research Center report. The number of non-book-readers has tripled in this country since 1978.

As New York Times columnist Charles Blow put it: "Reading texts is not the same as reading a text. There is no intellectual equivalent to allowing oneself the time and space to get lost in another person's mind, because in doing so we find ourselves."

Helping a camper find himself is what Birch Rock Camp has been all about since 1926. Now picture your son relaxing on his cabin bunk, with an engrossing book in his hands...

## LIKE US IN



Birch Rock Camp

# FAMILY CAMP'S ROOTS

*By James Brewster O'Reilly*



I first heard of Birch Rock Camp in 1980, not long after I met Onie and Chief's lovely granddaughter Wenda, cousin to Seth and

Toby and Ben Brewster. She was one of the lucky few girls who'd had the good fortune to attend as a camper. She spoke so happily of her experience there, it was clear that after we married, if we had sons, they would be Birch Rockers. This is how Wenda came up with the idea for Family Camp. We come as often as we can to satisfy the yearning for the Maine woods and Lake McWain that washes over us every year.

On my very first visit in 1986, the sour memories I had of two Lord of the Flies camps I attended as a child were purged. Birch Rock was a place that lived up to its motto, 'Help the Other Fellow' and instilled that most basic of human ethics in campers and counselors. Boys I've encountered randomly on paths and in the lake over the years look me in the eye and have the kind of manners young men rarely exhibit. Birch Rock Camp is a lovely microcosm of what we strive for in family life and civil society. Its campers represent how boys really can become men, their best and truest selves.

We enjoyed a huge family reunion at the first Family Camp in 2002, in which dozens of Brewsters and O'Reillys and my Balka cousins from Canada descended en masse. One cousin, a PhD candidate in statistics at the time, almost didn't make it—he had a lot of work to do, it was a long way—but then, he said, "I applied the calculus of regret, got in my car and headed south." Needless to say, he and the rest of us had a marvelous time.

We returned most recently to Birch Rock for Family Camp in August of 2013. The Maine woods, the call of loons, the silliness of skit night, and the sight of my now grown daughters on the porch reading, awash in the late summer light—this will sustain us.

*James O'Reilly is married to camper Wenda Brewster (whose name you can find on a plaque in the lodge).*



# COME JOIN US FOR FAMILY CAMP 2014: AUGUST 15-19





# THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

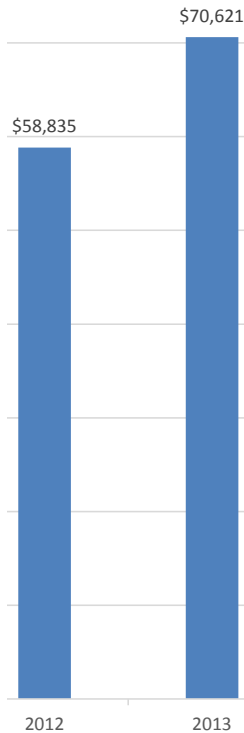
Birch Rock is profoundly grateful to each and every donor in 2013. You helped make it a banner year by giving so generously to the Annual, Capital, Endowment, Campership and In-Kind campaigns. With your support we're able to enhance the camping experience for boys, and keep our buildings, hillside and lakefront in excellent condition. We look forward to a tremendously successful 2014 camp season!

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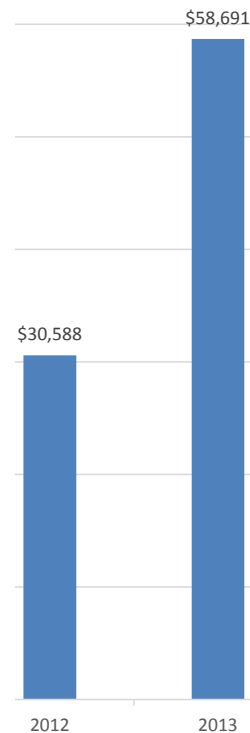
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## BIRCH ROCK CAMPERSHIP FUND BY YEAR



## BIRCH ROCK ANNUAL FUND BY YEAR



## WISH LIST

BRC appreciates your contributions to the camp community. Some items we wish for are:

- Framed Backpacks (\$100 each)
- Art Supplies & Equipment (\$500)
- Tennis & Baseballs (\$100)
- 3 to 4 Man Tents (\$200)
- Row Boat Oars (\$100 per pair)
- Kayak Paddles (\$50 per)
- Industrial Convection Oven (\$5000)
- Commercial Gas Grill (\$2000)
- Refrigerator Compressor (\$1000)

*Birch Rock Camp is a 501c3 nonprofit corporation. All donations received are tax-deductible.*

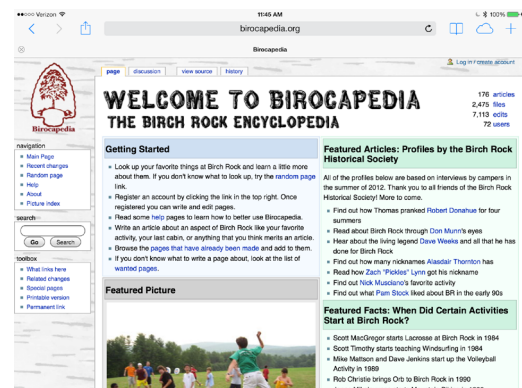
Please contact us at [birchrock@birchrock.org](mailto:birchrock@birchrock.org) if you might be able to accommodate any of those wishes.

BIRCH ROCK CAMP NOW ACCEPTS  
VISA/MASTERCARD  
[www.birchrock.org/donate](http://www.birchrock.org/donate)

Thank you!

## WWW.BIROCAPEDIA.ORG

Did you know that Birch Rock has its own encyclopedia? Created and facilitated by **Harry Netzer** '00 six years ago, **BIROCAPEDIA.ORG** is our digital wiki style reference for all that is Birch Rock. On **BIROCAPEDIA.ORG** you can find articles ranging from the history of Chief Brewster to the story of the Midnight Phantom. All the articles on **BIROCAPEDIA.ORG** are user submitted. We invite you to create an account and share your Birch Rock history with us. Creating a page is simple. Go to **BIROCAPEDIA.ORG** and search for a topic. If there is no current page, you can simply click the 'Create Page Now' icon. Help with formatting can be found by clicking the 'Help' icon on the left hand side menu. There you will find detailed instructions on how to create tables, insert pictures and much more. We thank **Harry Netzer** for creating this invaluable resource for archiving Birch Rock history. Now we want you to share your history!



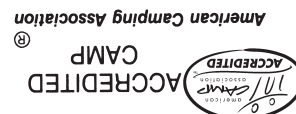
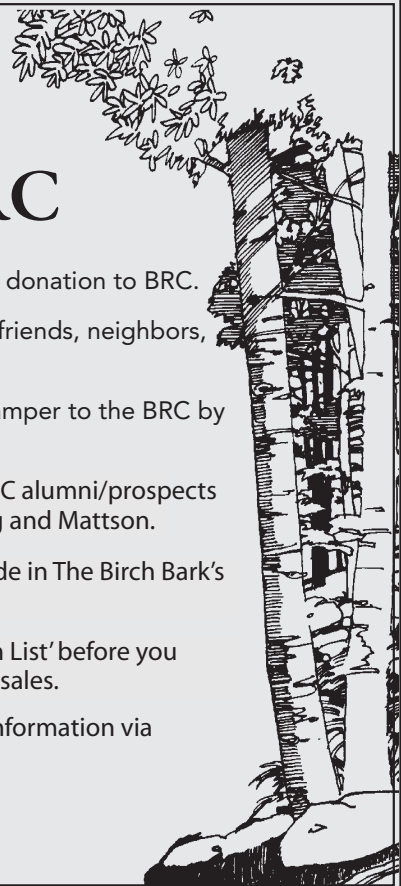
## Mark Your Calendars for 2014!



BRC Summer Office Opens	June 2, 2014
BRC Staff Orientation	June 13
C.I.T. Orientation	June 18
BRC Opening 1st Session	June 22
Cubs Camp I	June 22
Cubs Camp I ends	July 5
Cubs Camp II begins	July 6
BRC 1st Session Ends	July 19
Cubs Camp II ends	July 19
Opening 2nd Session	July 20
Maine Wilderness Adventure/Cubs Camp III begins	July 20
Alumni Day	July 26
Cubs Camp III ends	August 2
BRC for Boys ends	August 9
MWA ends	August 9
BRC Family Camp	August 15
BRC Family Camp ends	August 19

## It's Easy to Help BRC

- Send a tax-deductible donation to BRC.
- Promote BRC among friends, neighbors, family and colleagues.
- Refer a prospective camper to the BRC by phone or email.
- Host a gathering of BRC alumni/prospects with Directors Deering and Mattson.
- Send us news to include in The Birch Bark's Alumni News Column.
- Ask us about our 'Wish List' before you have your spring yard sales.
- Update your contact information via [www.birchrock.org](http://www.birchrock.org).



**BIRCH ROCK CAMP**

P.O. Box 148  
Waterford, ME 04088

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED